



TOWN OF TEWKSBURY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes June 26, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m. by David Plunkett, Chairman, at the Pike House (temporary Town Hall). Present were Marko Duffy, Mike Monahan, Brian Linder, and Larry Sanford. Also in attendance was Steve Sadwick, Director of Community Development, and Richard Montuori, Town Manager.

Patricia Lelos and Bruce Panilaitis were not in attendance.

A) Route 38 Open for Business Initiative

Mr. Montuori explained that Mr. Panilaitis has been working on the Open for Business initiative; which focuses on the Route 38 corridor in an attempt to get businesses to either improve the existing conditions, bring in small businesses as start ups, or to help those businesses that would like to expand. Mr. Panilaitis has been working on determining a way for the town to partner with financial institutions to provide loans to businesses for those purposes; as some may not have access to this otherwise. Both Enterprise Bank and The Lowell 5 have expressed interests in meeting with businesses along Route 38. Mr. Montuori noted that some other financial institutions have also expressed an interest in being involved in such a program. Discussion took place on conducting workshops with the banks to discuss what they have to offer for financing programs. Mr. Montuori explained that this could possibly be a series of workshops rather than just one night and discussed involving the Small Business Association as well as the State to see what they offer for small businesses. It is Mr. Panilaitis' hope that the town can appropriate some funds to help leverage some of these loan programs.

A follow up meeting took place with Mr. Montuori, Mr. Sadwick, The Lowell 5, Kendall Wallace, and Jim Cook of the Lowell Plan. At which, Mr. Wallace expressed interest in helping advertise and market Route 38 by putting flyers in The Lowell Sun newspaper that focus on local businesses. Mr. Cook discussed the different programs offered at the Lowell Plan. Mr. Montuori explained that one program is the banks in the community form a consortium to provide loans to businesses for economic development as the exposure is not as great.

Mr. Montuori explained that NMCOG has also been contacted regarding their nonprofit program. The program has not been very active; however, NMCOG is looking to resurrect this program. Mr. Montuori feels NMCOG would be the perfect group to put together a regional consortium of banks with surrounding communities and noted that this is something that NMCOG is working on.

Mr. Montuori noted that the Board of Selectmen has made it a priority that the State makes improvements on Route 38. Mr. Sanford asked if there is a timeframe for when the State will be improving Route 38. Mr. Montuori explained that there is a small project planned from Pike Street to the Lowell line; which is expected to be done in 2015, otherwise, there are currently no other projects planned. Mr. Montuori explained that Route 38 will likely have to be addressed in sections as the projects go through NMCOG under the transportation and improvement plan and only \$6 million is allocated for the entire region.

Discussion took place on the Beautification Committee and seasonal town employees who were hired to help improve the appearance of the town.

It was suggested that the businesses along Route 38 be invited to a meeting to discuss ways to help them improve their business, appearance, etc. Mr. Sadwick and Mr. Montuori will work on this.

Mr. Plunkett discussed the condition of the National Grid property along Route 38 and suggested meeting with them to find ways to improve the appearance of this area. Mr. Montuori explained that the Board of Selection has been working on implementing a bylaw that would address those types of issues. Mr. Duffy discussed the vacant sites and some of the crimes that have occurred and asked if there is a way that the property owners can also be held liable. Mr. Montuori noted that he will look into this. Mr. Sadwick explained that this has been researched by a member of the Beautification Committee and it was determined that Massachusetts has chosen not to participate in the property management portion of the International Building Code and there is currently no other code being utilized.

B) NMCOG Contract for Economic Development

a. Economic Development Self Assessment Tool

Mr. Sadwick explained that the self assessment is being done with district local technical assistance grant funds through NMCOG; who also helped set up the program. The program took place on June 11, 2014 and the entire self assessment was reviewed. Mr. Sadwick noted that Barry Bluestone will be back in the fall to review the assessment and show how Tewksbury placed against other communities

b. Inventory and Website

Mr. Sadwick noted that the website is in the process of being updated and NMCOG has been asked to help work on a website design for the EDC and also to work on the available sites in town. Mr. Sadwick explained that there have been lists of sites created in the past; however, they should be updated. NMCOG will be taking an inventory of the available sites and \$10,000 was previously secured at town meeting for this purpose.

Discussion took place on the vacancy rate. Mr. Sadwick reviewed the vacant space at the 495 business center. Mr. Montuori discussed an analysis he did to determine Tewksbury's total assessed value of commercial industrial compared to surrounding or like communities. Tewksbury's assessed value of commercial industrial was a little over 14%; which was average compared to the other communities. Mr. Montuori will provide this to the committee members.

Discussion took place on what attracted Thermo Fisher to Tewksbury. Mr. Montuori explained that Thermo Fisher had consolidated other surrounding locations. Mr. Sadwick noted that Thermo Fisher also purchased the building.

Discussion took place on determining what type of community Tewksbury wants to be and who it wants to attract. Mr. Montuori explained that one of his goals has always been to talk to the residents to hear what it is that they envision for Tewksbury. Mr. Montuori discussed possibly inviting a large group of residents to meet to discuss what is important to them and what they would like to see as far as town services, types of development, schools, etc. A third party facilitator would be brought in. Discussion took place on the past events that have been held: neighborhood meetings, breakfasts, etc. and the turnout has always been low.

Mr. Montuori explained that the website should be updated to have the ability to look at the site inventory as well as the amenities. Discussion took place on bad publicity the town has gotten. It was suggested to contact media outlets to do positive stories about Tewksbury and putting them on the website. Mr. Montuori suggested contacting Bill Gilman to see if he would be interested in doing a story on the Committee. Mr. Sadwick discussed the differences in tonight's meeting from those of the past and explained that the last few meetings have been about educating the Committee through the different organizations the town works with. Tonight's discussions have primarily been about quality of life issues, marketing the town, etc. Mr. Sadwick suggested the press be invited to the meetings as positive things are being discussed and this would be free publicity.

C) Update on development activity

Mr. Montuori noted that he and Mr. Panilaitis attended a meeting in June of Middlesex 3; which is a coalition of 5 towns along Route 3 (Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Bedford, and Burlington) who received State funding to create a regional group to look at improving economic development along the Route 3 corridor. They have reached out to Tewksbury as they would like to expand their group with the core mission of providing

economic development for those 5 communities. The cost would be \$2,000 a year to join. If a business came to one of those communities and they were not able to accommodate they could direct them to Tewksbury. They have also asked Lexington, Westford, and Tyngsboro to join. It was the consensus that it would be beneficial for Tewksbury to join.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

The next meeting has tentatively been scheduled for Thursday, July 31, 2014.

Adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Duffy made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Sanford and the motion carried 5-0.

Approved: 8/4/14

No documents submitted for 6/26/14 Agenda